

Independent Living Skills workshop: Nutrition on a Budget

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Guest speaker:

Lisa Doerr – Dietician (Loblaws)

She offers individual counselling, store tours and cooking classes

Healthy eating can:

- help prevent and/or manage chronic disease
- help to maintain energy throughout the day
- increase wound healing

Healthy eating is different for everyone! It changes depending on your age, gender, health status and goals.

The key is moderation.

Eating patterns are just as important to healthy eating as the specific foods you choose. For example, how often you eat, what you do while you are eating, and whether or not eating is an opportunity for socialization.

The Mediterranean-style diet is considered the healthiest way of eating. This includes a social aspect of eating; sharing food with family and friends has been shown to help reduce the risk of chronic health issues. This type of diet is also budget friendly because many of the foods included are affordable. The diet has 3 sections: foods to consume daily, weekly and monthly.

Daily foods include: cheese/yogurt, olive oil, whole grains (such as bread, pasta or rice), fruit/beans/legumes/nuts and vegetables. These types of foods are considered the healthiest for you and they are fairly cheap and they have a long shelf life, meaning they can be stored in a pantry for quite a while.

Canned vegetables with no salt added also fit into this section of the diet. They retain most of their nutritional value through the canning process, so as long as there is no additional salt, they are good alternative to fresh vegetables.

Dried fruit with no sugar added are also considered sufficient in the category.

Whole grains are the best version of grains to eat. A grain consists of 3 parts. The inside is the starch, which is used in making white bread. The outside is the bran or fibre, which is used in making whole wheat/brown bread and is good for heart health. The middle part of the grain is called the "germ" (basically, the seed) and contains large amounts of vitamins and minerals. Whole grain bread contains all 3 parts of the grain and so it contains all the important vitamins and minerals. It is easy to find whole grain breads because it will be on the label.

Olive oil is good, but intended to be used sparingly. Other oils can also be substituted in this section of the diet, for example, vegetable oil or canola oil.

It also important to monitor portion size. The size of a portion changes depending on the type of food. For example, portions of cheese, nuts and dried fruit are smaller than portions of fresh fruit and/or vegetables.

Weekly foods include: fish, eggs, poultry, and sweets. These foods are considered to be good for you, but less often and in smaller amounts.

Canned fish/poultry is just as good as fresh fish in this case, as long as it is just water and there is no added salt.

It is recommended that people who are concerned about their heart health do not consume more than 4 egg yolks per week. The yolks are high in cholesterol so you can try using only the whites.

Monthly foods include: red meat. This food has been linked to increased risk of developing chronic disease. It is also expensive, so cutting back is a bit easier. When you do choose to eat red meat, go for the leaner cuts with less fat.

Omega 3 is a nutrient in some foods that has been shown to reduce risk and help manage many chronic diseases, including arthritis and heart disease. Walnuts, flax seeds, chia seeds and fatty fish (eg. salmon, which is also the cheapest fish) are all high in omega 3s.

Because this is a popular trend in healthy eating right now, most products containing omega 3s will say so on the label.

2-3 servings of fish per week would give you enough omega 3 in your diet to benefit.

The omega3-6-9 pill is not necessary if you don't want to eat fish because you get enough omega 6 and 9 from your regular diet, don't waste your money buying it, just get an omega 3 supplement.

It is important to limit saturated and trans fats, added sodium and added sugar. All these ingredients are listed on food labels by law. Loblaws has a rating system for all their products, which makes shopping for healthy foods easier. It ranges from 0 to 3 stars, where 3 stars are the food that are the best for you. In this rating system, foods are given points for the things they contain that are good for your health and points are subtracted for the things they contain that are not good for your health. Essentially, it is a ratio reflecting the health value of the food.

Conditions with special diet considerations.

Diabetes – you want to be very selective about the carbohydrates you choose in your meals.

Heart concerns – you want to stay away from saturated and trans fats whenever possible.

With high blood sugars – you want to avoid high sugar foods and alcohol.

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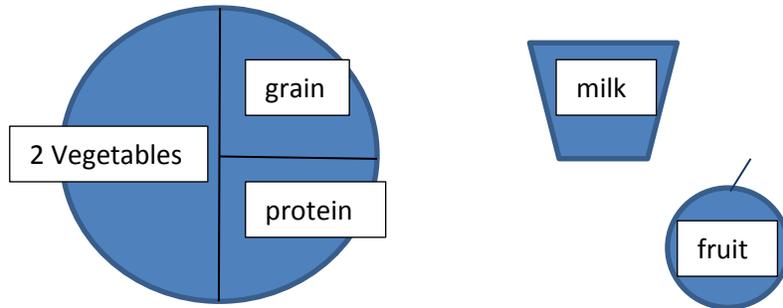
Energy giving foods – whole grains, fruits, milk products

Energy sustaining foods – protein, fibre (these help maintain energy levels over a longer period of time)

You should be eating every 4-6 hours over the course of your day to keep your energy levels relatively stable.

It is also important to drink water to help maintain your energy (about 6-8 cups per day).

When planning your meals, you should try to follow this guideline for the healthiest meals:



Portion size – the struggle!

Use your own hands, they are just the right size for your nutritional needs because they are specific to your body size and metabolic needs!

Fruits and grains – a serving is the size of your closed fist

Vegetables – a serving is as much as you can hold in 2 hands

Meat – a serving is the size of the palm of your hand, this includes thickness

Fats – a serving is the size of the tip of your thumb

Milk – a serving is 8 oz. (a small coffee as Tim's is 10 oz)

Healthy eating helps to improve muscle function. Calcium, vitamin D, protein, zinc and antioxidant vitamins are all important parts of healthy foods.

Calcium is important for bone health and strength.

Vitamin D helps strengthen and develop muscles.

Protein is used to make muscles. We are not able to absorb all the protein we need in one sitting, so it is important to eat small bits of high protein foods at different times during the day. We also become less able to absorb protein as we age.

Zinc and antioxidants are known to prevent skin breakdown and help with wound healing. You get these from fruits, vegetables and meats/meat

alternatives. If you know you don't consume enough of these foods, it is a good idea to take a multivitamin.

How do you actually go about improving your eating habits?

Menu planning is a very important skill when it comes to trying to eat healthier. Think about what you would like to eat throughout the week before you go to the grocery store! Check your cupboards and fridge and make a list before you go shopping. This is the best time to check flyers and find coupons, because you can select the ones for foods you are actually planning to purchase. Only use coupons for things you will actually eat! You don't actually save any money using coupons if you buy something you don't normally use and have to throw it out when it goes bad.

Try to keep some staple foods in your pantry/freezer at all times. Canned or dried goods that have a long shelf life are great! This makes it easier to prepare a healthy meal when you are short on time. Things such as canned fish, dried fruits, beans, legumes, etc.

Things to have in your fridge at all times: fresh meat (only if you plan to use it in the next 2 days), fresh fruits and vegetables, beverages (but keep juice less often because it tends to be high in sugar), condiments (look carefully at the labels on condiments, they are often HUGE sources of added sodium).

Things to keep in your freezer at all times: fruits and vegetables (frozen bagged vegetables are a great alternative to fresh items when they are not in season), bread, premade meals (NOT tv dinners! Make extras when you are cooking and freeze them for quick meal options later)

Cooking frozen vegetables can be a challenge, microwaving or boiling are the least healthy options because the nutrients leak into the water and don't get eaten, but you can use the water to make broth for soup to get at those lost vitamins and minerals. Steaming, baking or roasting are better ways to cook frozen vegetables because you lose less of their nutritional value. But cooking time is important! The shorter you cook them for, the fewer nutrients will be affected by the temperature.

Look carefully at the amount of sugar in granola bars, cereals, and yogurt. You want these items to have less than 8 grams of sugar. When choosing these, consider what else you will be eating.

We want to have 10% (24-36 grams per day) or less of our daily calories to come from 'added sugars' (on ingredients list) but natural sugars are better, so don't worry too much about the sugar in fruits (unless you are diabetic). We want only about 1500mg/day of sodium (ideal).